

Amendments to the Claims:

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| Claims 1-15 | Cancelled |
| Claim 16 (New) | <p>A chemically synthesized double stranded nucleic acid molecule comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) nucleotide sequence having between 14 and 24 nucleotides complementary to nucleotide sequence of a target RNA or a portion thereof;(b) a 5'-cap, a 3'-cap, or both a 5' and 3'-cap on one of the strands of the double stranded nucleic acid molecule; and(c) a mixture of modified nucleotides and unmodified nucleotides, wherein the modified nucleotides are 2'-fluoro, 2'-O-methyl, 2'H or a combination thereof and the unmodified nucleotides are ribonucleotides. |
| Claim 17 (New) | <p>The double stranded nucleic acid molecule of claim 16, wherein said cap comprises an inverted nucleotide.</p> |
| Claim 18 (New) | <p>The double stranded nucleic acid molecule of claim 17, wherein said inverted nucleotide comprises an inverted deoxynucleotide.</p> |
| Claim 19 (New) | <p>The double stranded nucleic acid molecule of claim 16, wherein said cap comprises an inverted abasic moiety.</p> |
| Claim 20 (New) | <p>The double stranded nucleic acid molecule of claim 19, wherein said inverted abasic moiety comprises an inverted deoxyabasic moiety.</p> |
| Claim 21 (New) | <p>The double stranded nucleic acid molecule of claim 16, wherein said nucleic acid comprises one or more phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages.</p> |

- Claim 22 (New) The double stranded nucleic acid molecule of claim 16, wherein said target RNA is encoded by a mammalian gene.
- Claim 23 (New) The double stranded nucleic acid molecule of claim 16, wherein said target RNA is viral RNA.
- Claim 24 (New) A composition comprising the double stranded nucleic acid molecule of claim 16 in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.